

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 13745 241654Z
ACTION SCS-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCA-01 L-03 H-02 DHA-05
SNM-02 DEAE-00 JUSE-00 /031 W
-----036012 250524Z /12

R 241615Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6691

UNCLAS ROME 13745

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CARR
SUBJECT: ARRESTEE AND PRISONER SERVICES: DEPORTATION OF PETTY
NARCOTICS OFFENDERS
REF.: STATE 194251

1. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, ITALIAN DRUG LAW PROMULGATED IN DECEMBER 1975 IN EFFECT DECRIMINALIZED POSSESSIO OF SMALL AMOUNTS OF NARCOTIC SUBSTANCES FOR PERSONAL USE. THE AMBIGUITY IN THE LAW (HOW MUCH IS A SMALL AMOUNT?) AND LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES TO IMPLEMENT MUCH OF THE LAW (THOUGH THERE ARE NO CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR MERE POSSESSION, "ADDICTS" ARE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT TO TREATMENT AT REHABILITATION CENTERS THUS FAR LARGELY NON-EXISTENT), HAS RESULTED IN FEW ARRESTS AND PROSECUTIONS OF DRUG USERS. MOREOVER, THUS FAR THERE IS LITTLE UNIFORMITY IN THE APPLICATION OF THE LAW, WITH SOME MAGISTRATES CONTINUING TO PROSECUTE FOR POSSESSION.

2. IN ANY EVENT, IN OUR EXPERIENCE THE ARM OF ITALIAN LAW HAS NOT BEEN HEAVY ON AMERICAN CITIZEN DRUG OFFENDERS. ITALIAN AUTHORITIES DO NOT "THROW THE BOOK" AT DRUG OFFENDERS WHO HAPPEN TO BE AMERICAN CITIZENS AND INDEED COMMONLY DEPORT THEM (OR IN THE CASE OF MILITARY PERSONNEL, ASSENT TO THEIR DEPARTURE SUBJECT TO LATER TRIAL IN ABSENTIAL). U.S. CITIZENS ARRESTED FOR TRAFFICKING IN NARCOTICS HAVE INVAIRABLY BEEN FAIRLY TREATED AND SPEEDY ACCESS TO THEM HAS BEEN GRANTED TO UNCLASSIFIED

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CONSULAR OFFICERS AS WELL AS TO U.S. MILITARY AUTHORITIES IN THE CASE OF ARMED SERVICE PERSONNEL. ALTHOUGH ITALIAN LAW PERMITS PRETRIAL DETENTION OF UP TO ONE YEAR, CASES INVOLVING AMERICAN OFFENDERS GENERALLY RECEIVE EXPEDITIOUS TREATMENT. AMERICAN PETTY OFFENDERS IN ALL CATEGORIES ARE OFTEN RELEASED THOUGH IN VIOLATION OF LAW WHICH IN THE UNITED STATES WOULD USUALLY RESULT IN CONFINEMENT.

3. IN SUM, WE ARE SATISFIED THT THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN THE
REFTEL ARE NOT RELEVANT TO OUR EXPERIENCE IN ITALY. THE EMBASSY
WILL OF COURSE CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION AND IN THE
UNLIKELY EVENT OF ABUSE WILL MOVE QUICKLY TO EXPRESS OUR INTEREST
TO GOVERNMENT OF ITALY AUTHORITIES.HOLMES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ROME13745
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770306-1037
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770828/aaaaaxnx.tel
Line Count: 68
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ac2a1054-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SCS
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 194251
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1499770
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARRESTEE AND PRISONER SERVICES: DEPORTATION OF PETTY NARCOTICS OFFENDERS
TAGS: CARR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ac2a1054-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009